

□ □ □

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, May 18, 2006

**Hastert to America: Working Class Families Don't Contribute
Republican Speaker Clearly 'Out of Touch'
Doesn't Know What Working Americans Are Paying in Taxes**

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today questioned a baffling statement made by Speaker Dennis Hastert last night during debate on the Republican budget, in which he assured Members that, *'if you earn \$40,000 a year and have a family of two, you don't pay any taxes. □ So you probably, if you don't pay any taxes, you are not going to get a big tax cut.'*

'Middle and working-class Americans have suffered greatly under the economic policies of the Bush Administration, and now we are seeing why,' Rep. Slaughter said.

'Last night, the third highest ranking Republican in the United States revealed how out of touch his party is with the challenges facing the vast majority of American families.'

"As energy and education costs increase, as real wages decline, as impending inflation puts the squeeze on the middle class, and as deficits mount, the Speaker of the House has revealed that he has no concept of the financial realities facing by working and middle-class Americans."

"His lack of knowledge may help Republicans pass tax cuts for millionaires, as they have done year after year, but it won't help ordinary Americans to build a better life for themselves and for their children."

To see Speaker Hastert's speech, click [here](#) or [here](#) .

BACKGROUND:

Since President Bush took office, middle and working-class families have found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet and to afford basic necessities, such as:

ENERGY: In the five years since Vice President Cheney's energy task force developed the administration's energy plan, middle and working-class American families have seen their energy costs increase by nearly \$2,000 per year. In 2001, the average American family spent \$3,300 on gasoline, home heating, and electricity. This year, that same family will pay more than \$5,100 for those needs.

HEALTH CARE: Since the beginning of the Bush Administration, the cost of health insurance for middle and working-class families has increased 57% - from \$6,348 per year to \$9,950 per year for the typical family. Rather than try and relieve that burden, the Republican Congress just passed a budget that slashes health care programs.

EDUCATION: Higher education is becoming less and less affordable for working and middle-class Americans. Since President Bush took office, tuition and fees at four-year private universities has skyrocketed 32%, and 57% at four-year public universities. Meanwhile, the Bush administration's FY 2007 budget would make the biggest cut to education investments in ten years, denying more than 460,000 low and middle-income students low-cost loans. Republicans also recently cut \$12 billion out of the federal student aid programs in order to help finance tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans.

HOUSING: Monthly home ownership costs have risen nearly 5% since President Bush took office, making home ownership not only almost impossible for low-income families, but increasingly difficult for middle-income families. President Bush's FY 2007 budget would slash

core Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs by \$1.15 billion, targeting essential HUD housing and community development programs for lower-income working families and families with children, among other groups.

###